

2001 Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey

Risk Behaviors of Montana Youth

Seat Belt Users vs. Non-Seat Belt Users

January 2002

Prepared for

Montana Office of Public Instruction
Division of Health Enhancement
Traffic Education Program
PO Box 202501
Helena, Montana 59620-2501

by

Dodge Data Systems, Inc.
1617 Euclid Avenue, Suite 5
Helena, Montana 59601

2001 Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey Risk Behaviors of Montana Youth Seat Belt Users Vs. Non-Seat Belt Users

Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey

The Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) is administered by the Montana Office of Public Instruction every two years to 7th and 8th grade students and to high school students. The purpose of the survey is to help monitor the prevalence of behaviors that not only influence youth health, but also put youth at risk for the most significant health and social problems that can occur during adolescence. While all schools in Montana can participate in the survey on a volunteer basis, approximately 54 high schools are randomly selected to be included with high schools from other states for national data and reports.

The 2001 YRBS was conducted in March of 2001 with 7,655 7th and 8th grade students and 9,157 high school students. This represents approximately 31 percent of all 7th and 8th grade students and 18 percent of all high school students in Montana. Schools administering the survey to students were provided with detailed written instructions on conducting a random survey in their schools. To encourage accurate responses to sensitive questions, a strict protocol was implemented to protect the privacy and confidentiality of all participating students.

Motor vehicle accidents are the single largest cause of deaths for Montana youth aged 15 to 19 years old. Of the 66 Montana youth who died in 1998, 32 or 48 percent of the deaths were due to motor vehicle accidents (Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, 1999). Seat belt use is estimated to reduce motor vehicle fatalities by 40 percent to 50 percent and serious injuries by 45 percent to 55 percent (U.S. Department of Transportation, 1984). Increasing the use of automobile safety restraint systems to 85 percent could save an estimated 10,000 American lives per year (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1991).

Survey Validity and Limitations

Data used in this report from the 2001 Youth Risk Behavior Survey are not based on a random survey. It would not be valid to generalize the findings from this survey to all 7th and 8th grade and high school students in Montana. It is only valid to attribute the results of this survey to the students who reported their behaviors in response to the items in the questionnaire. In addition, respondents in self-reported surveys may have a tendency to underreport behaviors that are socially undesirable, unhealthy, or illegal (alcohol consumption, drug use, seat belt non-usage, etc.) and overreport behaviors that are socially desirable (amount of exercise, etc.).

Montana Youth Who Use Seat Belts

In Montana during 2001, an estimated 65 percent of 7th and 8th grade students and 60 percent of high school students reported regularly using seat belts (most of the time or always wear seat belts when riding in a car driven by someone else). While both of these usage figures are marked increases over the 1999 data (61 percent of 7th and 8th grade students and 54 percent of high

school students did regularly use seat belts in 1999) there still remains a substantial portion of Montana youth who do not regularly use seat belts.

Female students in both 7th and 8th grade and high school tend to use seat belts more often than their male counterparts. In 2001, 69 percent of female 7th and 8th grade students and 64 percent of female high school students reported wearing seat belts regularly, while 61 percent of male 7th and 8th grade students and 50 percent of male high school students reported using seat belts regularly. Similarly, younger students also tended to wear seat belts more often than older students. In addition, Montana youth who identify themselves as white also tend to wear seat belts more often than those who identify themselves as nonwhite. Approximately 51 percent of nonwhite 7th and 8th grade students reported using seat belts compared to 68 percent of white students who regularly wear seat belts. A similar situation exists at the high school level. Forty-three percent of nonwhite high school students reported regularly using seat belts compared to 59 percent of the white students.

Are Montana youth who do not use seat belts more apt to engage in other high-risk behaviors than those students that use seat belts? For example, are youth who do not regularly use seat belts more likely to also use alcohol, use marijuana or inhalants, fight with other students, use chewing tobacco, or be sexually active?

These questions were investigated using a cross-tabulation of the 2001 Montana YRBS data. The results of this investigation are reported in the following section of this report.

Survey Results

For the purposes of the report, youth that are classified as using seat belts regularly are those Montana youth in 2001 that reported wearing seat belts always or most of the time while riding in a car driven by someone else. The risk behaviors that were investigated are listed in Table 1 for 7th and 8th grade students and in Table 2 for high school youth.

Results of the investigation indicate the following:

- **Montana youth who do not use seat belts are more likely to have used/abused alcohol than youth who reported regularly wearing seat belts.**

Montana 7th and 8th graders who do not use seat belts are nearly twice as likely (44 percent vs. 23 percent) to have had at least one drink of alcohol in the 30 days prior to taking the survey than seat belt users. Similarly, Montana high school youth who do not regularly use seat belts are nearly twice as likely (71 percent vs. 45 percent) to have had a drink of alcohol in the 30 days prior to taking the survey.

Montana 7th and 8th graders who do not use seat belts are three times more likely (12 percent vs. 4 percent) than seat belt users to have driven a car after drinking alcohol in the 30 days prior to taking the survey. Montana high school youth who do not use seat belts are nearly three times more likely (36 percent vs. 14 percent) to have driven a car after drinking alcohol than seat belt users.

Montana 7th and 8th graders who do not use seat belts are more than twice as likely (30 percent vs. 12 percent) than seat belt users to have been involved in binge drinking (5 or more drinks of alcohol in a row) in the 30 days prior to taking the survey.

Montana high school youth who do not use seat belts are about twice as likely (60 percent vs. 31 percent) to have been involved in binge drinking.

- **Montana youth who do not use seat belts are more likely to have used marijuana than youth who use seat belts regularly.**

Montana 7th and 8th graders who do not use seat belts are over three times more likely (23 percent vs. 7 percent) than seat belt users to have used marijuana in the 30 days prior to taking the survey. Similarly, Montana high school youth who do not use seat belts are over twice as likely (36 percent vs. 16 percent) to have used marijuana in the 30 days prior to taking the survey.

- **Montana youth who do not use seat belts are more likely to have used tobacco products on one or more of the past 30 days, than youth who regularly wear seat belts.**

Montana 7th and 8th graders who do not use seat belts are nearly three times more likely (27 percent vs. 10 percent) than seat belt users to have smoked cigarettes on one or more of the 30 days prior to taking the survey. Similarly, Montana high school youth who do not use seat belts are nearly twice as likely (47 percent vs. 21 percent) to have smoked cigarettes on one or more of the 30 days prior to taking the survey.

Montana 7th and 8th graders who do not use seat belts are over three times more likely (13 percent vs. 4 percent) than seat belt users to have used chewing tobacco or snuff on one or more of the 30 days prior to taking the survey. Similarly, Montana high school youth who do not use seat belts are over twice as likely (25 percent vs. 10 percent) to have used chewing tobacco or snuff on one or more of the 30 days prior to taking the survey.

- **Montana youth who do not use seat belts are more likely to be sexually active than youth who use seat belts regularly.**

Montana 7th and 8th graders who do not use seat belts are nearly three times more likely (17 percent vs. 6 percent) than seat belt users to have had sexual intercourse during the three months prior to taking the survey. Similarly, Montana high school youth who do not use seat belts are nearly twice as likely (40 percent vs. 22 percent) to have had sexual intercourse in the three months prior to taking the survey.

- **Montana youth who do not use seat belts are more likely to have been in at least one fight in the 12 months prior to taking the survey, than youth who use seat belts regularly.**

Montana 7th and 8th graders who do not use seat belts are more likely (51 percent vs. 35 percent) than seat belt users to have been in fight in the 12 months prior to

taking the survey. Similarly, Montana high school youth who do not use seat belts are nearly twice as likely (40 percent vs. 25 percent) to have been in a fight in the 12 months prior to taking the survey.

- **Montana youth who do not use seat belts are more likely to have seriously considered suicide than youth who use seat belts regularly.**

Montana 7th and 8th graders who do not use seat belts are more likely (22 percent vs. 14 percent) than seat belt users to have seriously considered suicide during the 12 months prior to taking the survey. Similarly, Montana high school youth who do not use seat belts are more likely (22 percent vs. 17 percent) to have seriously considered suicide in the 12 months prior to taking the survey.

Clearly, Montana youth who do not use seat belts also place themselves at higher risk for negative health consequences from other undesirable behaviors than youth who use seat belts regularly. This association exists in nearly every behavior risk category, except exercise and diet, in which there tends to be small differences between non-seat belt users and seat belt users (see Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1
2001 Youth Risk Behavior Survey
Risk Behaviors of Seat Belt Users vs. Non-Seat Belt Users
Montana 7th and 8th Grade Students

Health Risk Behavior	Seat Belt Users	Non-Seat Belt Users	Statewide Average
Had at least one drink of alcohol during the past 30 days (Q52)	23.1%	43.8%	30.2%
Drove a car when drinking alcohol during the past 30 days (Q13)	4.0%	12.1%	6.8%
Had five or more drinks of alcohol in a row during the past 30 days (Q53)	11.5%	30.0%	17.9%
Smoked on one or more days during the past 30 days (Q34)	9.7%	27.1%	15.8%
Used chewing tobacco or snuff during the past 30 days (Q43)	4.1%	13.4%	7.4%
Used marijuana at least once during the past 30 days (Q57)	7.0%	22.5%	12.5%
Sniffed glue or used inhalants to get high during their life (Q61)	11.6%	22.5%	15.4%
Had sexual intercourse during the past three months (Q71)	6.0%	16.6%	9.7%
Had been in at least one fight during the past 12 months (Q20)	34.7%	50.6%	40.3%
Seriously considered suicide during the past 12 months (Q26)	14.1%	22.0%	16.8%
Tend to think of themselves as about the right weight (Q76)	56.6%	53.6%	55.5%
Exercised on at least three of the last seven days (Q90)	77.2%	66.9%	73.4%

Figure 1
2001 Youth Risk Behavior Survey
Risk Behaviors of Seat Belt Users vs. Non-Seat Belt Users
Montana 7th and 8th Grade Students

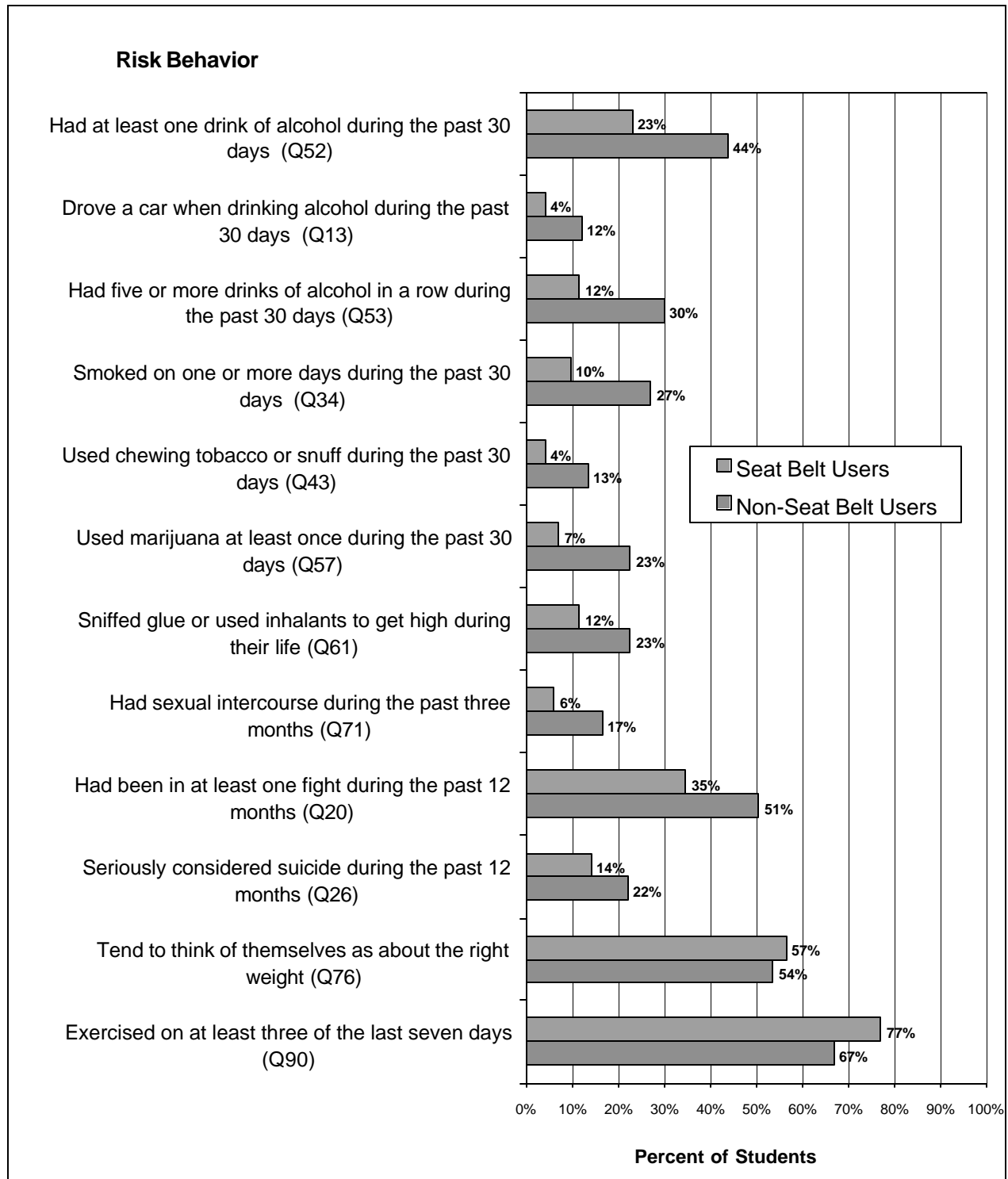


Table 2
2001 Youth Risk Behavior Survey
Risk Behaviors of Seat Belt Users vs. Non-Seat Belt Users
Montana High School Students

Health Risk Behavior	Seat Belt Users	Non-Seat Belt Users	Statewide Average
Had at least one drink of alcohol during the past 30 days (Q52)	44.5%	70.8%	54.1%
Drove a car when drinking alcohol during the past 30 days (Q13)	13.8%	36.3%	21.8%
Had five or more drinks of alcohol in a row during the past 30 days (Q53)	30.8%	59.5%	41.4%
Smoked on one or more days during the past 30 days (Q34)	20.6%	47.0%	28.5%
Used chewing tobacco or snuff during the past 30 days (Q43)	10.4%	25.1%	15.7%
Used marijuana at least once during the past 30 days (Q57)	16.3%	35.7%	27.1%
Sniffed glue or used inhalants to get high during their life (Q61)	10.9%	21.2%	15.0%
Had sexual intercourse during the past three months (Q71)	22.0%	40.1%	30.7%
Had been in at least one fight during the past 12 months (Q20)	24.9%	40.4%	31.6%
Seriously considered suicide during the past 12 months (Q26)	16.7%	22.1%	19.4%
Tend to think of themselves as about the right weight (Q76)	54.2%	54.1%	54.3%
Exercised on at least three of the last seven days (Q90)	71.5%	65.8%	67.6%

Figure 2
2001 Youth Risk Behavior Survey
Risk Behaviors of Seat Belt Users vs. Non-Seat Belt Users
Montana High School Students

